

men love play. At thirty-two he had built up the most lucrative law practice in town, and had accumulated in the neighborhood of thirty thousand dollars.

I don't think he had ever kissed a girl in his life. He never danced. He hated a dress suit as a dog does a muzzle. In short, he belonged to that type of men whom the community sets down as confirmed bachelors at twenty-five.

The marriage, naturally, was a nine days' wonder.

Later I learned that Clapsaddle had borrowed five thousand dollars from Brand only two weeks before the marriage. In the circumstances, it was more a gift than a loan.

I did not meet Wallace for two or three days. After I had congratulated him—with a mental reservation, I must confess—he said, still retaining my hand:

"June, between old friends it's best to blink at nothing. You would be more than human if you didn't share the town's surprise over this. I want to tell you that I married Vivian because she's the only woman I've ever loved or ever will love. And, take my word for it, she is worthy of the love of a far better man than I."

It was commonly said, of course, that she had married for money. Gossip never further overshot the truth. I was one of their few intimates after they went to housekeeping, and if ever a woman loved a man it was Vivian Brand. Her love fairly transfigured her; her husband seemed to fill her life completely.

THEN—incredibly to everybody, but most of all to me—their bubble burst. After three short months they separated. Brand never explicitly or connectedly told me the story; but I gathered that Vivian, while in France with her aunt, had carried on a rather desperate flirtation with one of our self-expatriated Americans, and, as always happened in her flirtations, it was the man who got burnt.

One day a letter came from him, and the foreign postmark naturally moved Wally to ask whom it was from. Now, the letter—to use Wally's own words—evidently frightened her. One can understand her terror lest it prove a flaming sword to drive her from her Garden of Eden. In her panic she lied to him—she told him it was from a woman; but her agitation betrayed her.

Brand's anger was cataclysmic. He took the letter from her hand forcibly, and read it; and in ten wild, crazy words—his own language again—he stabbed her love to the heart. She staggered out of the room and out of the house without so much as stopping to put on a hat.

These facts, of course, never reached the public; so it manufactured a story to fit the situation. It wasn't a pretty story, and Vivian's name became anathema in Loganstown. Women cut her dead on the street, and it was as much as a young fellow's reputation was worth to lift his hat to her.

Some ten months before her aunt had died, leaving Vivian five thousand dollars. This legacy, with rare devotion, she had turned over to her struggling father. It had proved less than a stop-gap, and he was now on his last legs financially. A few months later he lost the box factory, and went to work in the express office for fifty dollars a month. He still clung to his home, through the tolerance of the mortgagee; but the place was as shabby as himself, the paint peeling from the house, the lawn knee-deep with grass, pickets missing, gates awry. The last servant, the horses and carriage, Vivian's cart, pony, and automobile, had all disappeared.

The two sons, of course, left college. The elder one went West. The younger lived here for several months, odd-jobbing in the daytime, playing pool at night; then he, too, went West. Vivian took a position in the millinery department of Cartwright's store.

She had been there but a short time when her father died suddenly. Then the house was sold, and the family moved several blocks farther out, into a little kennel of a place, without furnace, electric lights, bath, or even running water. Yet Vivian, whenever I chanced to meet her,

looked as immaculate and fresh as if she had just emerged from a tub of rose-water. I detected, though, a gathering hardness in her face, a setting of the lines around her mouth. A woman doesn't go through such experiences without either hardening or breaking, and Vivian wasn't the kind you would expect to break.

DURING that winter a traveling hypnotist, advertising himself as "Alexander the Great," came to town for a week. The fellow, though undoubtedly a scamp and a card sharp, did not belong to the ordinary breed of charlatans. He wore their customary silk hat and frock-coat, to be sure; but he had a head that would have honored a statesman's shoulders, a clean-cut face, and a pair of compelling steel-blue eyes.

On Monday, the opening night, a number of professional men attended in a body, by special invitation. I was among them, being interested in hypnotism and having recently read Bernheim and Bramwell on the subject. Alexander promised us more than he delivered. His exhibition was a typical one, with the usual amount of fakery and horse-play.

His *pièce de résistance* was a telepathist or mind-reader who called out the number of your watch, the initial on your handkerchief, the number of matches in your hand, etc. This satin-gowned, bare-armed young woman, blindfolded and in a state of hypnosis, and speaking in a wandering, halting voice, was very effective. But the chief effect was obtained when, at the close, Alexander suddenly stepped behind her and whisked off her cambric mask, disclosing the face of Vivian Brand. The audience fairly gasped.

How the rogue got hold of her I can not imagine. Nor can I say whether her performance was merely a trick or a real demonstration of telepathy. Conventionally, it was a mad thing for her to do. Still madder, from the same point of view, was her acceptance of a permanent engagement with Alexander, though the presence of his wife muzzled the scandalmongers.

Naturally, I do not agree with those who stigmatized Vivian's act as a wanton escapade to humiliate Wallace Brand. For there is no doubt that her family was on the verge of want. They were four months in arrears with their rent; and when Vivian, on the following Saturday, came into the office of my former law partner, who was agent for the property, to pay this rent, she told him that Alexander was to pay her forty dollars a week. Cartwright had paid her six.

Three weeks later her mother and younger sisters packed the remnants of their household goods and moved back to Kentucky. Thus ended the sad chronicles of the Clapsaddles in Loganstown.

YET not quite. Something like a year afterward I was holding court in Belle City, down on the Ohio River. One suffocating night, after an evening session that lasted until eleven o'clock, I strolled about the business section of the town, loath to retire to my hot room. Main Street was dark, except for one shop window, which fairly blazed with light. Ten or a dozen people, mostly negroes, were grouped about the window, and a policeman stood in the entrance, twirling his night-stick.

The window was dressed to represent a bedroom. A brass bed, a white-enameled dressing-table, and a couple of white chairs stood out sharply against the black velvet hangings. But it was not until I crossed the street and joined the spectators that I discovered a woman on the bed, asleep.

She lay on her back. A thick plait of hair trailed over one shoulder. A sheet, secured with safety pins along the side of the mattress, was drawn well up over her body, yet not so high but that the square-cut neck of her night-gown, richly edged with lace, was visible. The sleeves of the gown, trimmed with the same stuff, were elbow length; and one bare forearm was arranged across her bosom with almost corpselike precision. Her lashes rested motionlessly upon the white skin beneath; her Cupid's-bow mouth drooped slightly,

like a babe's in slumber; her breast just perceptibly rose and fell.

Of course you have already guessed that it was Vivian Brand. But I did not recognize her until my eyes fell upon a placard leaning against one of the chairs. It read: "This woman was put into a hypnotic sleep this (Monday) night at the Lyric Theater by Alexander the Great. On Thursday night she will be awakened at the same place by Professor Alexander. Don't miss it! Also be sure to hear the free lecture which the Great Hypnotist will give in front of this store to-morrow at 12:15 sharp."

As I stood there among the wide-eyed, half-fearful negroes, I must confess to a share in their emotions. For seventy-two hours this delicate woman would lie in that unnatural sleep, breathing the hot, dead air of a show window, during a torrid spell that was taxing the vitality of the most vigorous. For three days she would lie there for the entertainment of passers-by—the curious, the mocking, and the morbid, the pure and the impure. Her volition surrendered to an unscrupulous charlatan, she would lie there like one locked in the embrace of a deadly drug, her spirit wandering through some dream-wrought paradise, her plight a public spectacle. A wave of anger passed over me.

Nevertheless, I resolved to hear Alexander the next day. I found the street in the immediate vicinity choked with people, and had difficulty in elbowing my way to the window. Vivian, though still asleep, of course, was not in the restful attitude of the night before. She had turned on her side; her cheeks were flushed. The poisonous atmosphere of the box was doing its work.

A GLANCE was sufficient for me, and I turned to where Alexander sat in an automobile hung with strips of black and orange cloth. He sat with folded arms, his tall hat tilted back, his large mouth set in a straight line, his hard gray eyes fixed, apparently, on the two brass buttons that decorated the back of his chauffeur's coat. He seemed as oblivious to the mob as Vivian herself. Yet, at the stroke of the quarter-hour, he promptly rose, removed his hat, and stepped up on the seat of the tonneau.

"My friends," he began, in a strong, resonant voice, "the woman you see in yon window lies in what is known as a hypnotic trance or sleep. It was induced by myself, and only I can break it. If that building were to burst out in flames, if your fire engines were to come thundering up over these granite blocks, if that plate-glass window were to be smashed, and if all of you, with one accord, were to rend the air with warning cries, not so much as one of her eyelids would quiver.

"Yet at my gentlest whisper she would wake, as you who are present on Thursday night will see. For she has resigned her personality, her ego, her will, her soul, her subliminal self—call it what you will—to me. I am her master. Therefore, my friends," he added, with a dramatic fall of his voice, "were I to drop dead in this car, that woman in yon window would never wake. She would gradually and insensibly pass into a state of dissolution."

He talked only a few minutes. As I moved away some one roughly gripped my arm. Turning, I saw the face of Wallace Brand, as white as chalk. He was the last man on earth I would have chosen to meet at the moment.

"June," said he harshly, "is there no way to stop this hellish business?"

"I'm afraid not, Wally," I answered. "If Alexander were to spit on the sidewalk or pluck a flower in the park, we could have him arrested; but for this—"

He wanted to interview Alexander; but, convinced of the futility of that course, I persuaded him to accompany me to my hotel. He had come over to Belle City, he told me, on business, and expected to go home that night.

He did not go, though. I knew why, of course, and I asked the hotel clerk to give him a room connecting with mine. I wanted to keep an eye on him. There was a look about his face that alarmed me.

His break with Vivian had left him somewhat like a man suffering from concussion of the brain. He had been avoiding his friends, and even I had seen little of him. Almost the only link with the past was his love of work, and he worked like a slave under the lash.

He promised me now to keep away from both the show window and Alexander. At two o'clock the next morning, however, he entered my room, dressed for the street.

"I've got to go down there, June," said he, in a strained voice. "If I can see her and assure myself that she's all right, I believe I can sleep."

When we reached the window he was calm enough, but a blind man could have seen how much he still loved the beautiful creature lying in that uncanny enthrallment. He gazed at her fixedly.

"I see they have installed an electric fan," I ventured, after some minutes. "And the hotel clerk tells me that Mrs. Alexander bathes her face and hands three times a day, and draws back the curtains to renew the air. From what I know of hypnotism, Wally, I'm confident she doesn't suffer. If she did she wouldn't submit to these operations."

"You think not, eh!" he said, turning upon me as if a stranger had obtruded on his reverie. "Don't men work and die in hell-holes of every description, every day in the year, in order that their dear ones may eat? Do you think her less capable of such heroism?"

IT was a relief to me when Thursday night came, the night of Vivian's awakening. Wally's tension relaxed, too, and at the supper-table he was almost cheerful. He insisted, however, on my sitting in the office with him until the return of the day clerk, who had gone to the show at the theater.

"Well," reported the clerk, selecting a cigar from the case, "he woke her, all right. But he didn't do it with no whisper. He bawled 'Wake up!' a dozen times, and slapped her face, and dipped his hands in ice water and held them on her forehead and the back of her neck."

"Slapped her face, did he!" observed Wally, with a glittering eye. "Hard?"

"You'd have thought so if you'd heard the smacks. Of course, you can't tell how much of it was faked. The ice water wasn't, though, for he had the pail in the wings, where the audience couldn't see it. One of the stage hands told me about it."

"How did she act?" asked Brand.

"Well, she sat up on the edge of the cot for a minute and stared at the crowd as if she didn't know where she was. Then she sort of blushed, and dropped back on the pillow and covered her face with the sheet, and four supes carried the cot off the stage."

"And you enjoyed it, I suppose," said Brand, so savagely that the clerk eyed him inquiringly.

"To tell the truth, no," he answered. "I wanted to beat that big brute up."

THE next morning I bade Brand goodbye. He had arranged to leave on the eleven o'clock train. Imagine my surprise when he entered the court-room about eleven-thirty and came up to my desk.

"June," said he,—and I have seen men receive the death sentence with the same stony face,—"that man is going to hypnotize Vivian again at noon, in the vestibule of the theater, and make her play the piano for God knows how long. I heard it at the station." His chin quivered; then he added, with the same deadly calm: "June, this will stop, legally or illegally!"

I determined to try to stop it legally and adjourned court at a quarter to twelve. We reached the Lyric five minutes before the hour, and, of course, found a crowd. A piano stood in the vestibule, ten or twelve feet from the sidewalk.

In a moment Alexander and Vivian appeared. She was dressed in some filmy black stuff, and wore a black, broad-brimmed straw hat banked with violets. She was pale, and thinner than she used to be. She looked tired. She did not give the crowd a glance, but stood with her eyes fixed upon the box-office window.